



Policy, Finance and Development Committee	Tuesday, 02 December 2025	Matter for Decision
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Report Title: **Town Centre Wi Fi and Footfall - Review of Systems**

Report Author(s): **Mark Hryniw (Town Centre Manager)**

Purpose of Report:	To investigate the continued use of the public Wi-Fi and footfall monitoring in the Borough.
Report Summary:	This report sets out a number of options for consideration in the light of increased costs and concerns over reliability of the current systems.
Recommendation(s):	That the content of the report is noted: that the Council shall proceed along the lines set out in Option 4 of this report (to stop providing free Wi Fi and to move to an alternative more cost-efficient means of counting footfall).
Senior Leadership, Head of Service, Manager, Officer and Other Contact(s):	Teresa Neal (Strategic Director) (0116) 257 2642 teresa.neal@oadby-wigston.gov.uk Adrian Thorpe (Head of Built Environment) (0116) 257 2645 adrian.thorpe@oadby-wigston.gov.uk Mark Hryniw (Town Centre Manager) (0116) 257 2706 mark.hryniw@oadby-wigston.gov.uk
Strategic Objectives:	Our Economy (SO3)
Vision and Values:	Customer & Community Focused (V1)
Report Implications:-	
Legal:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Financial:	The implications are as set out in this report.
Corporate Risk Management:	Economy / Regeneration (CR9) Decreasing Financial Resources / Increasing Financial Pressures (CR1)
Equalities and Equalities Assessment (EA):	There are no implications arising from this report. EA not applicable.
Human Rights:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Health and Safety:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Statutory Officers' Comments:-	
Head of Paid Service:	The report is satisfactory.

Chief Finance Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
Monitoring Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
Consultees:	None.
Background Papers:	None.
Appendices:	None.

1. Background

- 1.1. Oadby and Wigston Borough Council first investigated public Wi-Fi and Footfall counting in 2017 and a decision was made to install a system in Wigston – this system went live in April 2018. Systems were then installed in Oadby in January 2021 and South Wigston in January 2022. In the main these installations were funded through business rates funding.
- 1.2. The aim of the systems was to:
 - give the public access to free Wi-Fi – thus making the three centres better for visitors and also to allow a method of counting footfall in the centres.
 - enable the counting of footfall by counting the number of Wi-Fi enabled devices that move through the area – which basically counts the number of mobile phones with their Wi-Fi turned on.
- 1.3. Therefore, whilst this system does not count all footfall, it does provide a good indicator – the estimate is that the system counts 85% of footfall.

2. Effectiveness of System

- 2.1. The Wi-Fi system is fairly reliable, though restricted in terms of speeds, to prevent people streaming movies/television, as the system is designed to be for shoppers.
- 2.2. The system seemed to give fairly accurate footfall figures over the first couple of years and did show the effect of Covid on the footfall of the town.
- 2.3. However, over the last two years the data that we have seen coming through doesn't look so accurate. For example, on an event day, where there are certainly more people than usual, the footfall count often shows no uplift and in fact shows small decreases. The accuracy of the data has been taken back to the supplier, who are adamant that the data is correct and there is nothing wrong with the system.
- 2.4. Officers are not convinced that this is the case – for example, at the Wigston Christmas lights switch on, the footfall was high – Officers estimate there were around 3,000 to 4,000 people in attendance. But the footfall figure stated that there was only a total of 2,600 people over the whole day and 400 at the time the lights were switched on.
- 2.5. These figures don't add up, therefore Officers are not convinced that the footfall is counted accurately. Even taking into account the 85% accuracy of counting, then we would expect around 2,200 during the switch on and not 400.
- 2.6. The running costs for the first few years were included in the installation cost package for each system in each town. However, now that the Council has/is taken on paying for the cost of the system, the cost, combined with these concerns with regard to its accuracy have led us to consider alternative options.

3. Usage

- 3.1. The town centre Wi-Fi usage is good – currently Wigston averages around 3,000 connections per month, Oadby 3,500 per month and South Wigston 1,000 connections per month.

4. Cost Implications

- 4.1. Currently there are three costs to each centre – Public Wi-Fi, Geosense (footfall) and then broadband costs.
- 4.2. The broadband cost is needed for both the Wi-Fi and Geosense, so this cost would remain even if only one part was kept.
- 4.3. Wigston Annual Costs (currently paid for contract until 31st March 2026):
- Wi-Fi = £1,488
 - Geosense = £1,416
 - Broadband = £720
- 4.4. Oadby Annual Costs (currently paid for contract until 31st December 2025):
- Wi-Fi = £1,488
 - Geosense = £1,896
 - Broadband = £720
- 4.5. South Wigston estimated Annual Costs (currently paid for contract until July 2026):
- Wi-Fi = £1,488
 - Geosense = £1,416
 - Broadband = £720
- 4.6. The total costs for 2026/27 would come to £10,446 minimum, as the figures above are based on this year's figures and are likely to go up. The costs for 2027/28 would likely be £11,352 (again this is a minimum as there is likely to be an increase in costs).
- 4.7. The current revenue budget for the full system in 25/26 is £6,200 – which would mean an additional requirement of £4,300 in 26/27.

5. Options

- 5.1. Option 1:
- Continue with current supply and increase the revenue budget to £10,500 in 26/27.
- 5.2. Option 2:
- Cut the footfall counter and just leave the Wi-Fi – costs would be cut by £4,728. Removing the footfall counter would prevent us from being able to count footfall. It is important to count footfall so that we can evidence how measures that we put in place impact on the viability of the town centre.
- 5.3. Option 3:
- Cut the service completely – saving the entire budget.
- 5.4. Option 4:

- Cut the free Wi Fi and install a new footfall counting system – This would follow the decision that was taken by the Hinckley and Bosworth BID who also, until recently, used the same system as ourselves. Annual revenue costs would be approximately £2,200 per year for 2 counters per town (6 counters on total) although actual costs would be subject to undertaking a procurement exercise. This would allow a saving on the current revenue budget of circa £4,000. Some budget would need to be retained for any maintenance required.
- The install cost would be £2,500 per counter, so a capital outlay of approximately £15k for 6 counters. The counters in Wigston could be funded in 25/26 from available capital funding leaving £10,000 to find. This to be funded using an 'invest to save' arrangement with the revenue saving being put towards the capital cost of installing the new counters.
- There would be an impact of switching off the free Wi Fi, although general feedback is that it is slow and somewhat restrictive in terms of what can be accessed. Combined with the fact that it is much more common and cheaper for people to have data included in their mobile phone contracts, the impact upon the town of switching off the Wi Fi is likely to be limited, especially when weighed up against the cost to the Council of providing it now that we are out of the initial term that the service was included. It is of note that the Hinckley and Bosworth BID turned off their free Wi Fi in January and there has been no negative feedback from local residents or traders.